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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 7, 1999

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NEWS RELEASE

OPENING STATEMENT
REP. CURT WELDON, CHAIRMAN
RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
HEARING ON EMP THREATS TO
U.S. MILITARY AND CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

This morning, the Military Research and Development Subcommittee meets in open session to receive testimony on the potential of an electromagnetic pulse attack to disrupt the United States' military and civilian electronic infrastructure. Our open hearing will be followed by a closed, classified briefing. The classified briefing will give our witnesses an opportunity to brief members in greater depth, and to respond to questions that may be too sensitive to fully answer in open session.

Part of our purpose today in holding an open hearing on EMP is to help educate the public on this still not widely understood threat. An electromagnetic pulse can be generated when a nuclear weapon is detonated at high altitude, above the atmosphere. The EMP produced by such an explosion can, potentially, damage or destroy electronic systems across vast areas of the Earth's surface.

The United States has evolved into a technologically-dependent society, with high potential vulnerability to EMP. The widespread paralysis of electronic computer systems, communications, power grids, and transportation systems would not be merely an inconvenience. Nor would an EMP attack have only commercial consequences. Our modern way of life, and life itself, depends upon the functioning of our electronic society.

How severe would the consequences of an EMP attack on the United States be? Some have argued that an EMP event could be like putting the United States in a giant time machine and, in the blink of an eye, transforming our high-tech society into a primitive, pre-industrial one, circa the 19th century. Others argue that, while the consequences of an EMP attack would be serious, the effects are likely to be much less severe and more manageable.

The EMP threat may have acquired new, and urgent, relevance as the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missile technology accelerates. North Korea, for example, is assessed as already having developed one or two atomic weapons, and is on the verge of testing an ICBM capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to the United States. North Korea already has missiles capable of delivering a nuclear warhead against U.S. regional allies and U.S. forces based in Japan and South Korea.

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Is it possible that, given the small size of North Korea's nuclear arsenal, Pyongyang may consider an EMP attack the most efficient military option, the best way to inflict the maximum damage on the United States and its allies in the event of a conflict? Or perhaps the best way to blackmail or deter the United States in the event of a crisis?

There are differences within the scientific community over just how damaging an EMP attack would be. There are differing opinions among experts over the likelihood that a rogue state armed with a small number of nuclear missiles would prefer to perform an EMP attack, as opposed to blasting a city or a military base.

The main purpose of our hearing today is to air and explore these differences of opinion about the EMP threat by receiving testimony from two panels representing differing points of view.
On our first panel, representing the Administration and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, are:

Mr. Stanley Jakubiak
Senior Civilian for Nuclear C3 and EMP Policy
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Dr. Michael Bernardine
Provost for Theoretical Institute of Thermonuclear Studies
Los Alamos National Laboratory

The second panel is of independent experts:

Dr. William Graham
Former Science Advisor to President Reagan and
Rumsfeld Commissioner on the Missile Threat

Dr. Lowell Wood
Member of the Director's Technical Staff
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

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